May 10 , 2011  Western Middle School  
12:00 p.m.  
Mrs. C's classroom  
6th period

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| Observer Notes | Observation |
| The teacher asks several questions designed to make the girl think about the project more deeply.  Lots of technology work being done today.  Interesting reference to money.  I like this quote. I notice that the kids are helping each other a lot and it seems like they do it naturally.  Shows value of technology by students.  Immediate engagement.  The intervention specialist took a supervison role.  Problem with Prezi…needed an email. Many kids in this district many do not have the internet at home.  Problem solving  This group has many diverse learning needs and has been identified by the intervention specialist as on IEPs.  This group has trouble communicating with each other and making decisions. They state what they want to do, but do not know how to negotiate a logical solution.  This boy was off task all period. Seemed very uninterested and distracted.  This is the only reference to home use that I observed.  This group seemed very serious about their work and genuinely motivated to problem solve with the solution. They had big ideas.  This class is a fragmented class.  They have 15 minutes before lunch and 30 minutes after class.  In talking with the teacher, she gave me an update on the project.  She said some groups have taken off and other groups are struggling to find an appropriate problem.  For example, the students know that they want to study air quality or forest fires.  But there have been no forest fires in the area.  When thinking about air pollution they do not know where it exists in the area, such as from car exhaust.  She also mentioned that certain students on their job applications applied for jobs that had nothing to do with the project such as nurse, or veterinarian  It appeared that the students in this class already knew the procedure in getting the backpacks and in starting to work with the groups.  The groups all worked and talked in inside level voices.  There was no off task disruptive behavior.  Although when the students were talking, there could have been off task conversations.  It appeared that most of the students were either tinkering with the technology or talking to their classmates.  Only, one girl, the redhead, in group 2 was just sitting and appeared to be doing nothing, but she did talk to the girl next to her.  The teacher also mentioned that when the superintendent came to the district it was his mission to get technology free because he had to trim a million dollars off of the budget.  She said that she has to present with Milford and she thought that was funny, because CNE usually gets their hand me downs in terms of technological devices.   The teacher described how the superintendent goes to Chicago every year and brings a trailer home full of donated materials from businesses or the FBI.  Theses include technology and office supplies like graph paper or file folders.  Interview supt?  This class is described at a middle of the road group.  The first two groups are the higher level groups.  The last class (7th period) is the least functional of the classes.  All of the groups have their project ideas except group 1.  This is the group that the teacher sits down to talk to about choosing a topic and helps them organize how to go about doing so.  They seem to be having much difficulty in taking the lead on a topic and go back and forth a lot after the teacher leaves.  This is a group that has many diverse learning needs according to the intervention specialist.    Most of the other groups are using this time brainstorm ideas about topics, presentation styles and formats or I gathering information.  I am not sure what the assignment written on the board has to do with the project.  There is a lot of time spent today problem solving technologically:  finding out how to charge cameras, logging into the computer, using emails to access programs, trying to figure out why Prezi won' t work.  It seems that the teacher suggests a less complicated format because she does not know what to do about the Prezi problems.  The teacher seems frustrated several times with technological glitches.  The students often show each other how to work the different pieces of technology.  They go to their group members first and only approach the teacher if they have used up all of their resources within the group.  Group 4 appeared to work in a different way than the rest of the groups.  The boys in the group appeared to be off task, at least until two of them went outside. The Old Navy boy in this group was the only student In the room who appeared to be consistently off task and had no direction.  His group members nor the teacher stepped in to give him direction.  The teacher focused on groups who had specific problems and needed her help.  She was busy the entire time and it appeared that she did not notice that he was wandering.  This is not because she didn't care, but more because she chose to use her time for the more productive students and was heavily focused on solving problems.  The intervention specialists role was that of a supervisory helper to go outside and make sure those kids were supervised.    The students appeared to value the technology.  They continually had it in their hands most of the class period.  Students showed concern for taking good care of it. | May 10, 2011  Western Middle School 10:45 a.m. Mrs. C's classroom 5th period  Students enter the room.  Teacher says, "You guys can get your back packs." A female student comes up and asks the teacher if she can do compost.  The teacher says, “Yes.”  She asks several questions to a girl about the project more deeply.  “Where will you put the compost pile?  How will it work?” The teacher says.  One person at each group opens the computer on the desk and turns it on. One girl is looking at the screen of a digital camera. Another student is flipping a flip cam back and forth.  On the board is written the date due - Monday rd. Pgs.  44-49. Illustrate the 3 biogeochemical cycles. Chapter 1-5 Questions journal entries vocabulary.  4 students gather around the teacher and ask questions as she sits at the computer.  One boy asks a technical question about logging in.  One asks about a device.  Groups 1 and 4 are charging their computers.  The teacher says, "I believe Mrs. R was planning on taking some of you out.  I will plan accordingly so that we have an adult inside and outside." All groups are talking to each other.    One group is on a program called *Presentation Works*.  One group is on the Western Schools website.  Group 4 is discussing recycling with the teacher and she is giving them advice.  They are looking at the computer screen.    A student asks how much the digital camera costs.  The teacher says, "I ordered it with the money that I got from the grant.  It was about 150 dollars."  The teacher talks to group 1 about the digital camera.  The teacher explains how to tell how much the camera is being charged.  A girl asks when lunch is.  "Not yet, you have a couple of minutes," the teacher says.  The teacher talks to group 6 about obtaining a water sample.   Boy from group 1 says to his female group member. "I will show you how to do it."  He is talking about the flip cam.  The girl looks at the flip cams screen quietly.  The boy shows another boy in the group how to work the camera.  The other boy has the computer in front of him.  "I know you are recording," the boy says.  The girl aims the camera and begins to record.  She pushes the center buttons several times. "You can zoom in, you know, by pushing that," the boy says.  The girl stops.  The boy puts his hand out and tries to talk her into showing him something.  The girl laughs but keeps the camera and experiments with the different buttons.  She hands it to the boys in her group.  The two boys experiment with the camera and the flip cam.    "Alright guys, you may go ahead and get ready for lunch and line up.  You can leave your stuff just like it is," the teacher says.  "You need to close this, dude," boy From group 2 says.  "It will break."    The students line up.  The students come back from lunch and sit down with their groups.  Boys in groups 2 and 3 immediately go on their group's computers.   4 boys at the corner of the room stand up and talk.  The teacher isn't in the room yet.  All of the students at the first row are sitting down with their groups as well as the last group at the second table.  The 4 and 5 groups are off task.   Teacher enters the room.  Teacher talks to group 3 and asks them their topic.   The teacher says, "Where are my groups to go with Mrs. R outside to the pond.  The intervention specialist is taking them out to get water samples."  "Are you going to the pond?  I need you to share this camera," the teacher says.  The intervention specialist has the kids who are going outside sign a paper, so she knows who is going outside.  "Who has not signed up?" She says.  Group 4 student says, "We need the video camera."  Group 2 computer guy is asked if he is going out with his group.  He asks if he should close the computer.   Group 1 boy stares intently at the computer screen.  Yellow boy from group 4 takes a picture of another girl while he waits.  Four students hold cameras or flip cams in their hands.  All groups are talking.  Nathan in group 6 instructs another group member on what photo shots to get.  Red shirt boy from group 6 takes a picture.  He then packs up the technology in the backpack.  Half the class leaves to go outside.  Group 1 has one boy and girl left.  The girl asks, "What is our title page?  What can be the main title page?"   "Huh," boy says. "Let's make it pop out.  Go green," she says and he types in "Go Green." The girl suggests a grammatical change to the boy.  Teacher sits down with group 5 and talks about getting an email to be able to do a Prezi.  A group member, tall big boy, volunteers to use his email for the group to use.  Group 4 is standing up and talking.  I cannot hear their conversation.  They all gather around the computer.  The camera boy laughs a lot and talks to other group members.  Old Navy grey boy makes popping sounds with his mouth and hangs around the teacher.  He has a teacher sign his agenda and leaves the room.  Group 4 raises hand to get the teacher's attention.  "Usually, you put compost near a garden," the teacher says.  "Do you want to start a garden, a flower garden?" she asks the group.  "So you might think that.  Another option to consider is to think about a place without a lot of traffic.  We want a place you have access to but you don't want it sitting out front."    Girl from group 4 sits in front of computer.  She and another girl hold on to and refer to the project description paper.  They talk about a giant explosion.  Group 5 student says, "You might make a list pictures that we need."  The teacher says to Group 4, "Tell me what your problem is."  They are talking about explosions, but I am not sure know why.   "You are doing the PSA about recycling?  So for you guys, the map would be about the location of our school.  It is not about one specific place in the school.  We know that it is a more widespread problem, but for the problem you are working on.  There is a recycling center called Roundbottom Recycling.  Why are you taking a picture of your shoe?" Boy says because it looks different.  Two boys are looking at camera screen.   Student says, "We could just get a picture of..." Teacher says, "Or you could mention" A girl offers a suggestion.  Teacher goes to a group 1 and says, "Okay guys, what are you doing?  You guys need to decide what it is you need to work on.  You are here and need to get here in five days." She uses her hands to show where they are right now as compared to where they need to be.  She says, "It is a group effort.  How are you gonna do it?" "We are just talking about explosions," a boy says. The long brown haired girl lectures the boys and points to the project sheet and they start talking about what they need to do.  The girl who is the manager of the group says, "We need one person to do it.  Who is gonna do it?"  They boys start to argue about who will do the task.  The boys tell the short haired girl to go ask if she can do something in the hall.  The boy asks the log haired girl, "What do you want me to do?"  The boy skips at the front of the room.  The teacher is talking to group 4 and notices group 1. I am not sure what group 4 is doing. The teacher says, "Do you want to put it near the kitchen?" She talks about the pros and cons of that location.  The girl points out some of the issues with that location.  The teacher describes where she puts her garden and compost bin at home and applies this to where to put the compost bin at the school.  They discuses where to put the community garden.  A girl in the group makes suggestion about where she thinks the location should be.  Group 4 comes to teacher and asks about high school recycling bins.  They have extra and they are empty.  "Tell me what you need," she says.  The kid says they need no more than two recycling bins.  "What are you gonna do with them?" the teacher asks.  They want to use them for a recycling program.  She talks about executing the program.  "Make sure you know what your plan is.  You don't want all the background noise."  The long-haired girl asks to use another teacher's room to shoot video.  She says she is going to ask to shoot video.  The girl and the aqua blue boy leaves to ask the Teacher for permission.  The other three members go back to group area.    Group 4 is researching composting on the computer.  Grey Old Navy boy is wandering around the room, bursting his hands over students' heads and popping his mouth.  He tackles the head of a group 5 boy and then leaves to go to his group.  *Group 4 breaks apart.  Aqua boy puts equipment back into backpack and zips it up.  Old Navy boy puts it on his backpack.  "You guys are gonna need an editor," he says to group 5.  A group 5 boy gets up and is animated with his body.  The teacher comes and asks about their progress.  They say that the Prezi was problematic* and that they lost the Internet connection.  "What about a power point?" The teacher suggests instead of using a Prezi.  "Do you want to try it on the desktop?  We can send you out just yet.  Do you want to try it?" The teacher asks if they want to try to s the Prezi on the desktop. Big boy says, "How about a video? I have an idea."   They discuss the possibilities.  "Can you put a video in a Prezi?" "Yeah." "I don't know how to do that," the teacher says.  The group moves to the desktop. The other boy in the group talks about putting in awesome background music and awesome titles.  The big guy says that they need someone who can rap. They talk about the charging flip cam.  A group member says, "I take a picture of them," and they talk about smiling in pictures.  Group 4 talks about taking pictures.  A group member says, "Tomorrow, I say we come in, take the picture, make the power point.  If we have time we can work on the video." The two boys make a basketball shot but stop and listen to the long- haired girl talk about the plan.  Aqua boy says, "I will check to see if the teacher is back" and he leaves.  Brown long girl says tell him, "We don't Need it."  Short brown girl talks about possibilities of the video.  The entire time group 1 has been working quietly on the computer with very little talking.  A group 4 girl reads the quote on the bulletin board about "imagination is more important than knowledge," out loud.  "That is not good.  My imagination died out a long time ago," she says. "Why is there two?" they say at the same time.  "That was almost in unison." A student says, "Prezi is just having issues.  We are still fully logged in and each to rock And roll.  But it is just down, down, down."  The teacher is at the desk on her computer.  She says, "apparently, I am not the only one. We can keep trying." The group members discuss how to charge the flip cams. "I use it every day," The boy talks about how he uses the software at home.  I am not precisely sure.  The Teacher sits down and talks to the girl and tells her where to go on the screen.  The Old Navy boy sits at the desk and plays with pencil.  Two boys talk to each other.  "Try over here, hit system.  Hit safely remove."  The teacher taps the mouse and begins to move it.  "What?"  She says to herself.  "Really, it is gonna tell me that I can't do that.  it is safe to remove."  She twists the flip cam off.  "Oh it is fully charged.  This is too.  Oh no, this is the one I labeled two and it should be four."    The group collectively says, "Ohhhhhh.  We don't have a camera in ours.  We don't have a recorder in ours." The teacher says that theirs might be outside.  Group 1 girl takes the computer over and sets it in her lap.  Boy takes pictures of Old Navy boy.  "Can you get your butt over here?" aqua boy says to group 1 girl.  Long brown hair says, "we need a favor.  Can you take a picture?"  She gets up and the group 4 goes to the back of the room stands in a line.  The girl takes a picture of the group.   The boys make peace signs.  The Old Navy boy makes symbols with his hands and fingers.  Group 1 boy goes over there to see the picture.  He goes back to his group area and says, "I am bored."  He says something about the 150 dollar camera.  He picks up the camera and begins to scroll through the computer screen.  "I don't know when they are coming back.  Maybe they are stuck in the pond."  Aqua boy inserts the camera into the port of the computer and takes over the computer.  All but the Old Navy boy gather around the computer.  Group 1 girl puts the computer into the backpack.  The teacher says, "Those of you that are in my third class, go ahead and wrap up what you are doing.  Tell them what group you are in so that they know.  What group are you?  Tell Mr. W to send group 4 over.  It is 12:16. 16 minutes over the class time. Observation ends. |